

VZCZCXRO8210  
RR RUEHBZ  
DE RUEHBZ #0449 3201139  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 161139Z NOV 07  
FM AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0826  
INFO RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0296  
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHKI/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 0316  
RUEHBZ/AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE 0913

UNCLAS BRAZZAVILLE 000449

SIPDIS

SIPDIS, AF/EX PMO MARTINEZ, AF/C DESK BARGERON, PARIS FOR AFRICA  
WATCHERS, ENERGY FOR CAROLYN GAY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [EFIN](#) [EINV](#) [ELTN](#) [EAID](#) [PHUM](#) [ENRG](#) [CF](#)  
SUBJECT: BRAZZAVILLE IN BRIEF - NOVEMBER 16, 2007

¶1. Embassy Brazzaville is an unclassified Post.

¶2. Representatives of the London Club (LC) announced on November 15 that an agreement has been signed between the Republic of Congo (RoC) and the LC to forgive 77 percent of the US\$643.6 million debt owed to LC creditors. Government bonds will be issued to offset the debts and provide the GROC funds to channel into housing, health, water, electricity, and education. Speaking at the U.S. Embassy 's Villa Washington, LC representatives provided a positive outlook on the debt forgiveness and bond issuance. The representatives commented that although the GROC was difficult and slow to organize themselves, when the GROC officials finally met with the LC, the GROC officials came well-prepared and took a positive step by acknowledging their need for the agreement. As the question-and-answer activity unfolded at the Villa Washington, English students asked focused, specific questions about how the LC could agree to forgive the debts of a country that could certainly pay their debts if forced to. The disparity between the opening remarks of the London Club representatives and their answers were soon apparent: the LC said they were not a police force, they could not control the future spending of the GROC (the students pointed out that GROC officials will purchase private Hummers before they will pay for school books for the children). The ebullient mood of the LC representatives at the opening of their remarks was met with a dismal response from the Congolese, who were stunned that the LC would agree to deal with a government which could indeed pay their debts if forced to and that has demonstrated such a poor record on transparency and governance. A cable with full report will follow.

¶3. Pierre Oba, Minister of Mines, announced on November 12 that the Republic of Congo (RoC) has been readmitted to the Kimberley Process. He gave full recognition of the success of the re-application process to President Denis Sassou Nguesso: "...we can say that the President is the greatest architect of this work." The Kimberley Process controls the exportation of diamonds, and the RoC had lost its status in July 2004.

¶4. The Ministry of Transport has begun a selection process for local and international companies to build an alternate railway track to circumvent the flooded area between Goma-Tsitsi and Brazzaville. Embassy was not informed about the solicitation for bids, indeed cannot find any evidence of a public offering and has complained to the Ministry of Transport about the exclusion of US firms from this opportunity. While this project is not the major rehab that is needed to get the railroad back on its feet, the work would have been a good way for American companies to penetrate this market. Not surprisingly, the four "bidders" are French and Chinese.

¶5. Pacific Issoobeka, Minister of Economy, announced that RoC will receive US\$10,500,000 in food supplies from World Food Program (WFP) under the 2005 "Intervention Extended Relief and Recovery" program. This agreement will provide extra food to

5,100 malnourished people, increase to 9,600 the number of HIV/AIDS families receiving food, and expand the school lunch program to target 62,300 school children.

¶6. Local elections for City Advisors, the equivalent of a U.S. City Council director, and for members of the Senate, the lower house of Parliament, will be held January 20, 2008. City Advisors then appoint the mayors of the cities. Four districts will hold a new round of legislative elections on December 9. The Constitutional Court had decreed that the elections held in these four districts did not meet electoral standards. The four districts are: Bouenza, district of Yamba and district of Kayes; Kimbangou, district of Nauri; and Mbombo, district of Cuvette Ouest.

¶7. ENI SPA and ENI-Congo have been given a contract to build a gas power plant of 450 megawatts in Pointe-Noire. ENI, an Italian-owned company, has operated in the RoC since 1968 and is currently the second largest foreign oil producer in the RoC.

¶8. Prime Minister Isidore Mvouba will preside over the 42nd session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights opening on November 15. Representatives of governments, intergovernmental organizations, and national human rights NGOs will examine reports on specific aspects of human rights in Africa. Simultaneously, Souhayr Belhassen, chairman of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) accused the GRoC of violating human rights after being prevented by the RoC Minister of Security and Police, to hold a human rights rally on November 12 at the beach of Brazzaville to commemorate victims of "Disparus du Beach", the site where 350 refugees returning home to Brazzaville mysteriously disappeared in 1999.

WEISBERG